

Children, Youth & Family Consortium

CYFC Monthly

CYFC Monthly – March 2014

Nature's Connection to Mental Health

Whether we lived in rural areas and spent hours playing in streams, forests, fields or meadows, or we piled into station wagons each summer for family camping trips or weekends at the lake to escape the city's heat, most adults recall meaningful nature experiences as part of our childhoods. We recall not only the fun times, but the important lessons we learned as we took risks, experimented, problem-solved, collaborated and created while playing in nature.

Emerging literature suggests that interaction with nature is essential for healthy development — cognitive, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Learning in the context of nature improves test scores and grades and promotes problem solving, critical thinking, decision-making and creativity. Learning and recreating in nature improve attention, emotional well-being, and physical health. Engaging childhood experiences in nature produce emotional connections to the outdoors that translate into adult environmental stewardship.

Despite mounting research evidence, children spend less and less time in nature. Sometimes they are busy with lessons, sports or other activities. Many youth are increasingly “plugged in”. Sometimes children and their parents have fears of the natural environment that deter outdoor recreation. And, sometimes policies, such as shrinking or eliminating time for recess, prevent children from getting the exposure to nature that they need for healthy development.

Nature's benefits and best practices in creating safe, engaging nature-based experiences are topics central to the work of the Minnesota Children and Nature Connection (MN-CNC). MN-CNC is a coalition of professionals from diverse disciplines and sectors — early childhood development, health, education, parks and recreation, design, outdoor retail, nature centers, etc. — that have come together to be ambassadors for re-establishing a strong connection between children and nature. MN-CNC is launching a free, bimonthly brown-bag seminar to explore topics related to the benefits of and best practices in connecting children to nature.

This series will begin on March 14, from noon to 1pm at REI-Bloomington, with Nature's Connection to Mental Health. CYFC's [Judy Myers](#), Mental Health Coordinator, and [Cathy Jordan](#), Director (and a MN-CNC board member), will provide research-based information about the impact of nature experiences on promoting children's emotional well-being (to improve focus, enhance mood, decrease stress) and in treating mental health disorders in children (such as ADHD, depression and anxiety). Attendees will reflect on how they can enhance their own practice to better utilize nature to enhance children's mental health. Professionals in early childhood care and education, mental health services, child welfare, education, environmental education, healthcare, and related disciplines will find this topic of interest. Parents and caregivers are also welcome and encouraged to attend.

Cathy Jordan, PhD

Director

Consortium News

Summer Public Health Institute: Community Based Participatory Research

School of Public Health

Dates: May 27- 30, 2014

Location: University of Minnesota (exact location of the course will be emailed to you)

CYFC Director Cathy Jordan along with her community partner Susan Gust will be teaching Community-Based Participatory Research at the Summer Public Health Institute. This is an introductory course about community-based participatory research (CBPR) intended for graduate students and community practitioners interested in adding CBPR to their repertoire of effective approaches to understanding and addressing social and health disparities. We will explore topics such as the purpose and applications of CBPR; partnership formation and maintenance; issues of power, trust, race, class, and social justice; conflict resolution; ethical issues; and CBPR's relationship to cultural knowledge systems. Registration closes May 20, 2014.

Strengthening Families in the Context of Incarceration - 2014 Research to Practice Series

CYFC in partnership with Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH)

Date: April 29, 2014

Location: DECC in Duluth, MN

What do our own stories and the research tell us about how children and families experience incarceration? How can we make decisions based on their best interests? Learn one man's journey from prison to a successful life and the community resources and relationships that supported him. Explore the state of the research and programs with demonstrated effectiveness and based on developmentally-informed best practices. View "Mothers of Bedford", an award-winning film that follows five women incarcerated at New York's Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, and meet Bobby Blanchard, former Director of the Children's Center at Bedford Hills featured in the film.

Children, Youth & Family Consortium has partnered with MACMH to present the 2014 [Research to Practice Series](#) as part of the Annual Mental Health Conference. Rebecca Shlafer, Ph.D., Jason Marque Sole, ABD and Barbara "Bobby" Blanchard-Lewis, J.D. will present. [Check out our videos](#) to learn more!

Requesting Input from Minnesota Social Workers

Take this brief 5-10 minute survey for a chance to win a \$50 Visa gift card! The purposes of this survey are to assess the strengths of, and barriers to, collaboration as well as information-sharing between county child welfare and education professionals in providing the best social services for children and families in Minnesota.

If you work with children involved in the child welfare system in either the education field (e.g. school social worker, teacher, counselor, dean, administrator) or in county services (e.g. social services, child protection, case worker), we want to hear from you!

University and Community Announcements

Managing your child's fears and worries

[MomEnough Podcast](#)

[Listen](#) to this conversation with psychologist and author Dr. Dan Peters and MomEnough hosts Marti and Erin Erickson discuss children's worries and fears and how they can interfere with sleep, appetite, school,

work and fun. Hear Dr. Peters steps for helping your child learn to manage fears and worries and similar strategies that will work for you.

Prescription Opioid and Heroin Abuse: Children and Communities at Risk

[Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health \(MACMH\)](#)

Date: March 11, 2014

Time: 9:30 am - 11:30 am

Location: St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church

Cost: \$69

Carol Falkowski, Director of Research Communications at the Hazelden Foundation and author will present at this [MACMH sponsored event](#). Earn 2 clinical education hours while learning about the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S. and Minnesota — prescription painkiller (opioid) abuse. After attending, you will be able to describe the nature and extent of this abuse and its relationship to heroin abuse, describe the factors that contribute to the widespread abuse of these medications, describe the basics of addiction and limitations of the service delivery systems in addressing it, understand mental health issues and outline what can be done by parents, professionals and communities.

Social and Emotional Learning: Assess it to Address it

University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development and the Minnesota 4-H Foundation

Date: May 6, 2014

Time: 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

Location: TCF Bank Stadium - DQ Club Room and online via live webinar

Cost: Free but registration required

Gil Noman of Harvard University and Kimberly Schonert-Reichl from the University of British Columbia will present at this event as part of the [symposium series](#) dedicated to understanding social and emotional learning. The focus of this symposium will be the opportunities that emerge when measuring social and emotional learning as well as strategies for addressing the challenges that arise.

Evidence-based Practice for Working with Young Children and Their Families

University of Minnesota [Center for Early Education and Development \(CEED\)](#) and the Minnesota Department of Education

Dates: June 12-13

Location: St. John's University, Collegeville, MN

Cost: Early Bird Rate (through April 15): \$90, Regular Rate: \$110

Hear new insights and learn new skills for working with young children and families through this professional development opportunity. Each day of the [Summer Institute](#) will begin with a keynote followed by individual sessions. Sessions include ACES Advanced Session: Creating Trauma-informed Systems and Programs, Mining the Untapped Resource of Fathers, and Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Young Children and Their Families within a Cultural Context. One academic credit and/or 12 clock hours are available for [attendees](#).

Job Opportunities

- [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, \(Spanish\) Nobles County](#)
- [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Stearns County](#)

- [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Crow Wing County](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Todd County](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Beltrami \(with American Indian Experience\)](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Redwood County](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Polk County](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator, Clearwater County](#)
 - [SNAP-Ed Regional Educator \(American Indian\), Mahnomen County](#)
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